

Prediabetes online programme



Waterside PCN

Created by the Waterside Primary Care Network
Health and Wellbeing Team

Some information taken from: [diabetes.org.uk](https://www.diabetes.org.uk)

Part 4 – Understanding food labels

Part 4 content:

- Understanding food labels
- Portion size
- Useful online links
- Focus of the week



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Understanding food labels



Understanding food labels

If you buy pre-packed foods and drinks, understanding the information on food labels can help you make healthier choices that will help you and your family to eat well.

Labels on foods and drinks give essential information, such as:

- the ingredients
- the nutrients (such as fats, calories, fibre)
- how much they contribute to what an average adult needs each day.

On the back

Information on the back of a pack is compulsory and gives details about the ingredients, nutritional composition, known allergens, 'best before' or 'use-by' dates and the weight of the product. The ingredients are listed in order, starting with the highest-quantity ingredient first, down to the lowest- quantity ingredient last. So, if you find sugar at the top of the list, the food is likely to be high in sugar.

On the front

The traffic light system for 'front of pack' labelling, while still voluntary, has been around for a while now and is an easy way to check at a glance how healthy a food is. The labels show how many calories are in the food or drink and are also colour coded to show whether the food is low (green), medium (amber) or high (red) in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt. The information on the front of the pack also tells you how the portion of the food contributes to the Reference Intake (RI) of an adult. Try to choose foods with more greens and ambers and fewer reds. And, if the traffic lights aren't available, check the 'per 100g' column on the 'back of pack' nutritional label.

Why aren't carbs included on the 'front of pack' label?

The 'front of pack' labelling is voluntary and only an addition to the 'back of pack' labelling, which is mandatory. We and other organisations campaigned for supermarkets and food manufacturers to have clear consistent information on the front of pre-packaged food. The objective of this campaign was to make it easier for people to make informed choices based on how healthy a particular food is.

The information included in the 'front of pack' labelling is meant to help people, at a glance, quickly decide which foods are healthier based on the amounts of fats, sugars and salt. These nutrients are colour coded based on EU set criteria for low, medium and high amounts. Carbohydrates are not included in the 'front of pack' information partly because there is no set criteria for determining what the amount of low, medium or high carb is in a particular food.

The 'back of pack' labelling provides detailed information on other nutrients including carbohydrates. These are expressed in per 100g so that people can easily compare two similar products. In addition to the per 100g info, many products also provide nutrient contents in per portions so this can be useful for people who want to know the amount of carb they are eating.

Chicken & Vegetable Broth

600g e

A soup made with vegetables, cooked chicken and pearl barley.

Ingredients

Water, Carrot (10%), Onion, Chicken (6%), Potato (5%), Spinach (2%), Peas (2%), Cabbage (2%), **Celery** (2%), Chicken stock (chicken skin, water, chicken extract, chicken, sugar, salt, cornflour, chicken fat, onion concentrate), Potato starch, Pearl **barley**, Rapeseed oil, Garlic purée, Salt, Black pepper.

! ALLERGY ADVICE

For allergens, including cereals containing gluten, see ingredients in bold.

! Warning

Although every care has been taken to remove bones, some may remain.

Nutrition

Typical values (as consumed)	per 100g	per 1/2 pot (300g)	%RI	your RI*
Energy	167kJ 40kcal	501kJ 119kcal	6%	8400kJ 2000kcal
Fat	1.2g	3.6g	5%	70g
of which saturates	0.2g	0.6g	3%	20g
Carbohydrate	4.2g	12.6g		
of which sugars	1.2g	3.6g	4%	90g
Fibre	1.1g	3.3g		
Protein	2.5g	7.5g		
Salt	0.5g	1.5g	25%	6g

*Reference intake of an average adult (8400kJ/2000kcal) (RI). Contains 2 portions.

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Energy
 The terms 'kJ' and 'kcal' (calories) tell you how much energy is in a product.

The higher up an ingredient on the ingredients list, the more of this is in a product.

Saturates
 Saturates is another word for saturated fat. This section tells you about the amount of saturated fat in the product.

'Of which sugars'
 This describes the total amount of sugars from all sources – free sugars, plus those from milk, and those present in fruit and vegetables.

Salt
 You may see 'sodium' listed rather than salt. To convert sodium into salt, multiply the amount on the label by 2.5

Reference Intake (RI)
 These are the recommended maximum daily amounts of energy and nutrients you need for a healthy balanced diet. % RI tells you how much of the reference intake the stated portion size provides.

And if there's no nutritional info?

Not everything you buy will have nutritional information, but that doesn't mean the rest of the pack doesn't give you clues to help you make a healthier choice.

It's important to check the ingredients list or back of pack label so you can compare two products like for like per 100g.

What else?

Many of the claims made on food packaging, such as fat free or low fat, can be confusing.



Here's the difference:

- Fat free: has to have no fat, but check the ingredients list for added sugar, which are often used to replace the fat.
- Sugar free: check the ingredients list for fats which may replace the sugar.
- Low fat: the product has 3g or less of fat per 100g.
- Low sugar: has less than 5g of sugar per 100g.
- No added sugar: although no sugar is added, there may be naturally occurring sugar in the food.
- Reduced fat or sugar: contains at least 30 per cent less fat or sugar than the standard version of the product. This doesn't necessarily mean it's healthy and in some cases the lite version of, say, crisps, can contain the same amount of calories and fat as the standard version of another brand.



OAT flakes (21%), invert sugar syrup, sugar, glucose syrup, **WHEAT** flour, vegetable fats (palm, shea), rice flour, cocoa butter, cocoa mass, honey (2%), dried skimmed **MILK**, **WHEAT** bran, dried whey (from **MILK**), dried whole **MILK**, humecant, **MILK** fat, **BARLEY** malt extract, emulsifiers (**SOYA** lecithin, E471, E476, sunflower lecithin), salt, molasses, flavourings.

Sugar is not always listed in the ingredients as 'sugar'. Look out for; sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, honey, palm sugar, hydrolysed starch, syrup and invert sugar. Remember, the higher up on the ingredients list sugar is, the more added sugar is in the product.



REDUCED FAT

Product is 25 per cent lower in fat than the standard product. Often these foods were very high in fat to start with.



LOW FAT

Product has less than 3g or less fat per 100g

Reduced and low fat are **not** the same thing.

	Fat	Saturates	Sugar	Salt
What is HIGH per 100g	Over 17.5g	Over 5g	Over 22.5g	Over 1.5g
What is MEDIUM per 100g	Between 3.1 & 17.5g	Between 1.6 & 5g	Between 5.1 & 22.5g	Between 0.31 & 1.5g
What is LOW per 100g	3g and below	1.5g and below	5g and below	0.3g and below

Based on guidelines by the Department of Health, under the terms of the Open Government Licence.

Follow these tips to become expert at understanding labels in minutes

1. With traffic light labels, go for green, occasionally amber, and red only as a treat.
2. Reference intake (RI) percentages are given per portion, and indicate how much the portion contributes to the amount of calories, fat, sugars and salt an average adult should have each day. Check how much of the pack counts as a portion to avoid consuming more calories, fat and sugar than you need.
3. All **carbohydrates** raise blood glucose levels. Labels on the front don't include the amount of carbs, so check the label on the pack for the total carbohydrate, which includes carbohydrates from starchy food as well as sugars.
4. The figures for **sugars** on traffic lights are for total sugars, which doesn't tell you how much of the sugar comes from natural sources, such as fructose and how much is added, such as sucrose or glucose. Check the ingredients list – if syrup, invert syrup, cane sugar, molasses or anything ending in 'ose' is within the first three ingredients, this suggests the food contains more added sugar. Choose an alternative if possible, or be mindful of the portion you eat.
5. Check the **fibre** content on the back of pack label. If you're choosing between two similar products and one has more fibre, choose that, as we should all be consuming more fibre as part of our daily diet.
6. Check the manufacturer's definition of a portion size. It may differ from yours and be smaller than you would like! However, if you are trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, it's a good idea to reduce your portions.

change 4 life
Food Scanner

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/nhs-food-scanner-app/>

Portion size

A manufacturer's definition of a portion or serving size may be different from yours. In general, the portion sizes given are suitable for adults over the age of 18.

Younger children and teenagers may need different amounts. Even with healthier choices, if you eat large portions you may end up consuming more calories, fats and sugars than you need.

How much you eat of any food influences your nutrient and calorie intake, so think about the portion size when you're buying food and don't always eat the amount the manufacturer recommends if you think you need less.

Top tips for managing portion sizes

- Use smaller plates and bowls to help make your portion sizes look bigger.
- Weigh food if you find it hard to gauge portion sizes. Foods like muesli, pasta and rice can be difficult to get right at first, so try using the same container to measure out certain foods.
- Be mindful of what you're eating. It takes about 20 minutes before your brain registers that you're full, so eat slowly, putting your knife and fork down in between mouthfuls.
- Download [**My weight-loss planner \(PDF, 534KB\)**](#) as a way to monitor the food you're eating, including portion size.



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Useful online links for healthy recipes, calorie and weight management information

- Diabetes UK Healthy Recipes:
<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/recipes/chicken-tikka-masala>
- NHS Calorie Checker:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/calorie-checker/>
- NHS Weight Loss Plan:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>
- Carbs and Cals:
<https://www.carbsandcals.com/healthy-eating/healthy-eating>

Healthy Eating and Portion Control Online Resources

Food Portions:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/healthy-living/healthy-eating/healthy-eating-toolkit/food-portions>

NHS Eat Well Guide:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>

Dietary Fibre:

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/22-high-fiber-foods>

Choosing Healthy Fats:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/different-fats-nutrition/>

Diabetes UK – Healthy Recipes:

https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/recipes?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhfu89s7B8QIVeEJ3Ch3keAQJEAAYASAAEglic_D_BwE



Focus of the week

Think about the food you buy ...

Do you read the food labels?

Are you concerned about the
content of your food?

Do you know what ingredients you
are eating?

Do you have a better understanding
of food labels now?

**Ask yourself ... do I need to make
any changes?**